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Listing of Claims

1. (currently amended) A computer implemented method for surveying a user with a tailored sequence of questions, comprising the steps of:

5   presenting at least one question from a collection a segment of the sequence of questions to said user, the user answers to said at least one question segment determining, regardless of the sequence of the presented questions, an affinity of said user to at least one or more affinity groups, wherein each affinity group comprises a plurality of user profiles;

10   creating a profile for said user if a profile does not exist for said user, otherwise accessing an existing profile for said user, and adding said at least one question segment of questions and corresponding answers to said user profile;

      determining if a corresponding affinity group exists for said user profile and, if so, associating said user profile with at least one or more affinity groups, based

15   on said user's profile questions and corresponding answers, regardless of the order in which questions were presented, otherwise creating at least one new affinity group and, said at least one new affinity group created by associating at least one said user profile, including said user profile with each other, based on answers to questions provided in said user profiles and regardless of the order in

20   which the questions were presented said new affinity group;

      presenting a particular subsequent question from segment of said sequence collection of questions to said user, the selection of said subsequent segment question, and therefore the specific order in which said questions in said collection of questions are presented to to said user, being determined in

25   responsive to be influenced by an answer received to a previously presented question in said collection of questions and a particular affinity group or combination of affinity groups to which said user profile is associated by said method;

      repeating the steps above until all possible questions of said sequence

30   collection of questions have been presented to and answered by said user; and

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storing said user profile;

at least one of the questions being pertinent to at least one of compensation, benefits, wages, and economic analysis.

5   2. (currently amended) The method of Claim 1, wherein said at ~~lease~~ least one question from said collection of questions is comprised of a set comprising at least one question group that forms a logical grouping of question fields into a single record.

10   3. (cancelled)

4. (currently amended) The method of Claim 1, wherein said at least one particular subsequent ~~questions~~ question from said collection of questions is presented because of at least one of:

15   popularity of said subsequent questions within said particular affinity group or combination of said affinity groups;

as a most frequently answered subsequent question within said particular affinity group or combination of said affinity groups;

as a most recently answered subsequent question within said particular

20   affinity group or combination of said affinity groups; and

with regard to a defined relation to said at least one question that was presented prior to said subsequent question.

5. (previously presented) The method of Claim 1, wherein at least one question is

25   capable of receiving an answer that comprises an open text.

6. (previously presented) The method of Claim 5, wherein said open text allows said user to add a new answer value for said question.

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7. (previously presented) The method of Claim 6, wherein said new answer is used as one of a plurality of possible answers to said question when said question is subsequently posed to a second user.

5   8. (previously presented) The method of Claim 1, wherein a question comprises at least two possible answers.

9. (original) The method of Claim 8, wherein said user may select more than one answer to said question.

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10. (previously presented) The method of Claim 8, wherein said at least two possible answers are presented because of at least one of:

    popularity of an answer within said particular affinity group or combination of said affinity groups;

15   as a defined relation to said at least one question;

    as a most frequent answer within said particular affinity group or combination of said affinity groups; and

    as a most recent answer within said particular affinity group or combination of said affinity groups.

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11. (previously presented) The method of Claim 1, wherein said method further comprises the step of:

    filtering said user profile, wherein said filtering comprises the application of a rules engine that compares said user profile to a set of predefined criteria.

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12. (original) The method of Claim 11, wherein said filtering step is performed in at least one of:

    real-time; and

    batch mode.

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13. (previously presented) The method of Claim 11, wherein said filtering step further comprises the step of:

    modifying an answer to said question based on at least one of:

        predetermined criterion;

5   at least one filtering rule;

        consistency with previously answered questions;

        consistency with all answered questions; and

        consistency with answers of said particular affinity group or combination of said affinity groups.

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14. (previously presented) The method of claim 13, wherein said modification comprises at least one of omission of said answer, and tagging said user profile as inactive.

15   15. (previously presented) The method of Claim 1, further comprising the steps of:
    periodically creating a new affinity group by associating at least one user to said new affinity group.

20   16. (original) The method of Claim 1, further comprising the step of:
    a user creating a new affinity group.

17. (original) The method of Claim 16, further comprising the step of:
    associating matching user profiles with said new affinity group.

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18. (original) The method of Claim 1, further comprising the step of:
    providing a report.

19. (original) The method of Claim 18, wherein generation of said report is constrained by at least one of:

an attribute of said user profile; and

a reporting goal.

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20. (original) The method of Claim 19, wherein said goal comprises at least one of:

a profile attribute value;

a range of profile attribute values;

a Boolean value reflective of a set of values;

10   a Boolean value reflective of a set of non-values;

a date range;

a minimum count of matching profiles;

a maximum count of matching profiles;

a question filter;

15   an affinity filter; and

a match score threshold.

21. (original) The method of Claim 19, further comprising the step of:

weighting said constraints to provide a match score.

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22. (previously presented) The method of Claim 19, said step of providing said report comprising the steps of:

matching between at least a matchfield of said goal and a corresponding matchfield of at least one of an affinity group and a user profile, and

25   generating a match score.

23. (original) The method of Claim 22, further comprising the step of:

determining at least one best match from a plurality of possible matches.

30 24. (original) The method of Claim 23, further comprising the step of:

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arranging matches by order of match score; said order being grouped to at least two levels of matches, based on said score.

25. (original) The method of Claim 22, said step of matching further comprising the

5   step of:

      providing an aggregated score for said matching step; and

      weighting the importance of including said match in said report.

26. (previously presented) The method of Claim 24, said step of matching further

10   comprising the step of:

      classifying each match score as one of:

          deterministic to meeting said goal; and

          non-deterministic to meeting said goal.

15   27. (original) The method of Claim 19, wherein said goal is any of:

      a personal goal, wherein said personal goal is a result of a plurality of user inputs pertaining to personal aspirations; and

      an external goal, wherein said external goal is a result of a plurality of arbitrary inputs.

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28. (original) The method of Claim 27, wherein said aggregated information comprises statistical information.

29. (original) The method of Claim 27, wherein a report resulting from a personal

25   goal comprises:

      a comparison of a user having said user profile to at least one of:

          a plurality of user profiles; and

          an affinity group.

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30. (currently amended) A computer implemented method for performing a compensation survey of a user with a user tailored series of questions, comprising the steps of:

presenting at least one question from a collection of questions to said user,
5   the user answers to said at least one question determining ~~regardless of the order~~ ~~in which questions are presented,~~ an affinity of said user to compensation within one or more affinity group, wherein each affinity groups ~~group~~ comprises a plurality of user profiles, each of said user profiles comprising a plurality of segments of questions and corresponding answers;

10   creating a user profile for said user if a profile does not exist for said user, otherwise accessing an existing profile for said user, and adding said at least one question and corresponding answers to said user profile;

determining if a corresponding affinity group exists for said user profile and, if so associating said user profile with at least one or more existing affinity groups,
15   based on user's profile questions and corresponding answers, ~~regardless of the~~ ~~order in which questions are presented,~~ otherwise creating at least one new affinity group and, ~~said new affinity group created by~~ associating ~~a plurality of user~~ ~~profiles that include~~ said user profile with ~~each other, based on answers to~~ ~~questions provided in~~ said ~~user profiles and regardless of the order in which the~~
20   ~~questions are presented~~ new affinity group;

presenting ~~at least one~~ a particular subsequent question from said collection of questions to said user, the selection of said at least one subsequent question, and therefore the specific order in which said segments of said sequence of questions are presented to said user, being ~~influenced and~~
25   ~~dynamically~~ determined in response to ~~by~~ a particular affinity group or combination of affinity groups with which said user profile is associated;

repeating the steps above until all ~~appropriate~~ possible questions of said collection of questions have been presented to and answered by said user; and

storing said user profile.

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31. (previously presented) The method of Claim 30, wherein at least one question from said collection of questions is comprised of a set comprising at least one question group forming a logical grouping of question fields into a single record.

5   32. (cancelled)

33. (previously presented) The method of Claim 30, wherein said at least one particular subsequent question from said collection of questions is presented
10   because of at least one of:
          popularity of said subsequent question within said particular affinity group or combination of said affinity groups;
          as a most frequently answered subsequent question within said particular affinity group or combination of said affinity groups;
15   as a most recently answered subsequent question within said particular affinity group or combination of said affinity groups; and
          with regard to a defined relation to said at least one question.

34. (previously presented) The method of Claim 30, wherein at least one question
20   is capable of receiving an answer that comprises an open text.

35. (previously presented) The method of Claim 34, wherein said open text allows said user to add a new answer value to said at least one question.

25   36. (previously presented) The method of Claim 35, wherein said new answer is used as one of a plurality of possible answers to said question when said question is subsequently posed to a second user.

37. (previously presented) The method of Claim 30, wherein a question comprises
30   at least two possible answers.

38. (original) The method of Claim 37, wherein said user may select more than one answer to said question.

5   39. (previously presented) The method of Claim 37, wherein said at least two possible answers are presented because of at least one of:

popularity of an answer within said particular affinity group or combination of said affinity groups;

as a defined relation to said at least one question;

10   as a most frequent answer within said particular affinity group or combination of said affinity groups; and

as a most recent answer within said particular affinity group or combination of said affinity groups.

15   40. (previously presented) The method of Claim 30, wherein said method further comprises the step of:

filtering said user profile, wherein said filtering comprises the application of a rules engine that compares said user profile to a set of predefined criteria.

20   41. (original) The method of Claim 40, wherein said filtering step is performed in at least one of:

real-time; and

batch mode.

25   42. (previously presented) The method of Claim 40, wherein said filtering step further comprises the step of:

modifying an answer to said question based on at least one of:

predetermined criterion;

at least one filtering rule;

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consistency with previously answered questions;

consistency with all answered questions; and

consistency with answers of said particular affinity group or combination of said affinity groups.

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43. (previously presented) The method of claim 42, wherein said modification comprises at least one of omission of said answer and tagging said user profile as inactive.

10 44. (original) The method of Claim 30, further comprising the steps of:

periodically creating a new affinity group; and

associating at least one user to said new affinity group.

45. (original) The method of Claim 30, further comprising the step of:

15   a user creating a new affinity group.

46. (original) The method of Claim 45, further comprising the step of:

associating matching user profiles with said new affinity group.

20 47. (original) The method of Claim 30, wherein said affinity group comprises at least one of:

profession;

geographic location;

compensation;

25   compensation range;

experience;

experience range;

position; and

position range.

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48. (original) The method of Claim 30, further comprising the step of:

    providing a compensation report.

49. (original) The method of Claim 48, said compensation report is constrained by

5 at least one of:

    an attribute of said user profile; and

    a reporting goal.

50. (original) The method of Claim 49, further comprising the step of:

10   weighting said constraint to provide a match score.

51. (original) The method of Claim 49, said goal comprising at least one of:

    a desired compensation;

    a desired range of compensation;

15   a desired geographic location;

    a desired firm; and

    a desired range of firms.

52. (original) The method of Claim 49, said step of providing said report,

20 comprising the step of:

    matching between at least a matchfield of said goal and a corresponding
matchfield of at least one of:

    an affinity group; and

    a user profile.

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53. (original) The method of Claim 52 further comprising the step of:

    determining at least one best match from a plurality of possible matches.

54. (original) The method of Claim 53, further comprising the step of:

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arranging matches by order of match score, said order being grouped to at least two levels of matches, based on said score.

55. (original) The method of Claim 52, said step of matching further comprising the
5   steps of:

        providing an aggregated score for said matching step; and

        weighting the importance of including said match in said report.

56. (original) The method of claim 55, said step of matching further comprising the
10   step of:

        classifying each match score as one of:

           deterministic to meeting said goal; and

           non-deterministic to meeting said goal.

15   57. (original) The method of Claim 49, said goal comprising any of:

        a personal goal, wherein said personal goal is a result of a plurality of user inputs pertaining to personal aspirations; and

        an external goal, wherein said external goal is a result of a plurality of arbitrary inputs.

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    58. (original) The method of Claim 57, said personal goal comprising at least one of:

        compensation;

        compensation range;

25   salary;

        salary range;

        geographic location;

        position; and

        position range.

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59. (original) The method of Claim 57, wherein said aggregated information comprises statistical information.

60. (previously presented) The method of Claim 59, wherein said statistical
5   information comprises at least one of:
          average compensation;
          average salary;
          median compensation;
          median salary;
10   salary percentile;
          standard deviation;
          trend;
          profile count;
          most frequent compensation; ands
15   most frequent salary.

61. (original) The method of Claim 57, said report resulting from said personal goal providing a comparison of a user having said user profile to at least one of:
          a plurality of user profiles; and
20   an affinity group.

62. (original) The method of Claim 30, said compensation comprising at least one of:
          annual salary;
25   monthly salary;
          weekly salary;
          hourly rate;
          bonus;
          tip;
30   benefits; and

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vacation time.

63. – 91. (cancelled).

5   92. (currently amended) A computer implemented method for surveying a user
with a series of questions tailored to said user, comprising the steps of:

presenting at least one question from a collection of questions to said user,
the user answers to said at least one question from a collection of questions.
determining, ~~regardless of the order in which of the questions are presented,~~ an
10   affinity of said user to compensation within one or more affinity groups, wherein
each affinity group comprises a plurality of <u>user</u> profiles;

receiving answers from said user;

storing said at least one question and said answers in a user profile;

determining if a corresponding affinity group exists for said user profile and,
15   if so, associating said user profile with at least one or more affinity groups, based
on said user's profile questions and corresponding answers, ~~regardless of the~~
~~order in which the questions are presented,~~ otherwise creating at least one new
affinity group, ~~said new affinity group created by~~ <u>and</u> associating ~~a plurality of user~~
~~profiles, that include~~ said user profile with ~~each other, based on answers to~~
20   ~~questions provided in said user profiles and regardless of the order in which the~~
~~questions are presented~~ <u>new affinity group</u>;

filtering said user profile, wherein said filtering comprises the application of
a rules engine that compares said user profile to a set of predefined criteria;

modifying an answer if it is inconsistent with at least one of:
25   said user profile; and
said affinity group;

determining an appropriate next question from said collection of questions
to be presented to said user, said appropriate next question<u>, and therefore the</u>
<u>specific order in which said segment of said questions are presented to said user,</u>
30   being ~~dynamically~~ determined based on at least a particular affinity group or

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combination of affinity groups to which said user profile is associated by said computer-implemented method and an answer to a previously presented question; and

repeating the foregoing steps until a full profile is established.

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93. (previously presented) The method of claim 92, further comprising the steps of:
at least periodically checking all user profiles; and
attempting to generate at least an affinity group, wherein said affinity group comprises at least a user profile.

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94. (original) The method of Claim 92, further comprising the step of:
preparing a report based on at least one of:
an attribute of said user profile; and
a reporting goal.

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95. (previously presented) The method of Claim 92, wherein said step of filtering said user profile is performed in an off-line mode.

96. (previously presented) The method of Claim 92, wherein said appropriate next

20   question is determined based on at least one of:
popularity of said question within said particular affinity group or combination of said affinity groups;
a defined relation to said at least one question;
a most frequently answered question within said particular affinity group or

25   combination of said affinity groups; and
a most recently answered question within said particular affinity group or combination of said affinity groups; and
in relation to said question.

30   97. (original) The method of Claim 94, further comprising the step of:

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querying any of a database of a plurality of user profiles and a database of a plurality of affinity groups for a statistical report.

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98. (original) The method of Claim 97, wherein said statistical report comprises at least one of:

       average compensation;

       average salary;

       median compensation;

       median salary;

10   salary percentile;

       standard deviation;

       trend;

       profile count;

       most frequent compensation; and

15   most frequent salary.

99. (original) The method of Claim 98, further comprising the step of:

       generating said statistical report with at least one of said attributes held constant.

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100. (original) The method of Claim 94, said generating step further comprising the step of:

       constraining by at least one of:

           an attribute of said user profile; and

25   a goal.

101. (original) The method of Claim 100, wherein said goal comprises at least one of:

       a profile attribute value;

30   a range of profile attribute values;

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a Boolean value reflective of a set of values;

a Boolean value reflective of a set of non-values;

a date range, a minimum count of matching profiles;

a maximum count of matching profiles;

5   a question filter;

an affinity filter; and

a match score threshold.

102. (original) The method of Claim 100, further comprising the step of:

10   weighting said constraint results to provide a match score.

103. (original) The method of Claim 100, further comprising the step of:

determining a best match from a plurality of possible matches.

15   104. (original) The method of Claim 103, further comprising the step of:

arranging said match by order of match score, said order being grouped to

at least two levels of matches, based on said score.

105. (original) The method of Claim 100, said matching step further comprising the

20   steps of:

providing an aggregated score for said matching step; and

weighting the importance of including said match in said report.

106. (original) The method of Claim 100, said step of matching to said affinity

25   group further comprising the step of:

classifying each match score as one of:

deterministic to meeting said goal; and

non-deterministic to meeting said goal.

30   107. (original) The method of Claim 100, said goal comprising one of:

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a personal goal, wherein said personal goal is a result of a plurality of user inputs pertaining to personal aspirations; and

an external goal, wherein said external goal is a result of a plurality of arbitrary inputs.

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108. (original) The method of Claim 107, wherein said aggregated information comprises statistical information.

109. (original) The method of Claim 108, wherein said statistical information

10 comprises at least one of:

average compensation;

average salary;

median compensation;

median salary;

15 salary percentile;

standard deviation;

trend;

profile count;

most frequent compensation; and

20 most frequent salary.

110. (original) The method of Claim 107, wherein a report resulting from a personal goal provides a comparison of a user having said user profile to at least one of:

25 a plurality of user profiles; and

an affinity group.

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